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AN ESSAY ON SOURCES
FOR THE STUDY OF
THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE SOVIET UNION
1934-1960

by

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University of Wisconsin
Madison, Wisconsin

External Research Paper 137

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INTRODUCTION

This bibliographical essay is a discussion of materials which the author found most helpful in preparing The Politics of Totalitarianism: Volume Three of A History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (New York: Random House, 1961).¹ The essay will ordinarily be more useful if read in connection with the book, for the value of a source is more clearly understood in the discussion of a concrete historical context.

Because of the enormous importance of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in the contemporary world, materials which have some bearing on its history since 1934 are almost infinitely numerous. To mention only two of the subjects of peripheral but notable significance, materials relating to the course of international relations and sources relevant to the complex development of the Soviet economy often are important for the study of the CPSU. Obviously, it was not possible to examine all pertinent sources; on the other hand, the great majority of materials relating directly to Soviet internal politics proved too ephemeral, trivial in content, or unreliable to be of significant use in studying the CPSU. Instead, therefore, of presenting an unmanageably lengthy bibliography, it seems preferable to discuss the major sources in essay form.

It is the author's hope that the highly selective description of the principal sources presented in this essay--together with the footnote references to specific topics in The Politics of Totalitarianism--will be helpful as a guide for further study. Perhaps the most important, if frustrating, counsel which may be given to anyone embarking on a study of Communism is to look for his materials in the least expected places. This means, of course, that no guide to sources is a substitute for the widest and most diffuse reading which the investigator can feasibly undertake.

¹The volume was prepared as part of the three-volume study sponsored by the Research Program on the History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Columbia University. The two additional volumes in the series, by Leonard B. Schapiro and Harold H. Fisher, cover the pre-revolutionary development of the Russian Bolshevik movement and the structure, operations, and policies of the Soviet Communist Party, 1917-1934.

I. UNPUBLISHED SOURCES

Unfortunately, there are relatively few unpublished documents available concerning recent Soviet politics. With rare exceptions the Soviet archives have remained closed to outside inspection. A large number of the very valuable materials collected by the Germans during their occupation of portions of the USSR during World War II fell into the hands of the Western Allies, but many of these materials remain under security classification.

Of the available unpublished German accounts, the largest group consists of the collections made for the Allied prosecution staffs at the Nuremberg trials of war criminals. Very few of these documents, however, have any direct relation to CPSU history. The few found useful were gathered in connection with the prosecution of the German armed forces; they are catalogued under the rubric NOKW (Nürnberg--Oberkommando der Wehrmacht). Recently, many additional German documents have been declassified for microfilming by the American Historical Association. Two of these were used in this study: H14/14, a collection of German reports, including captured Soviet documents on partisan warfare, and EAP-3a-11/2, an NKVD defector's account. Through the courtesy of the Department of the Army, the author's notes on a Soviet order for the relocation of the commissariats in World War II were declassified several years ago.

Much more important than the fragmentary items described above is the Smolensk Archive, the records of a Party obkom during the inter-war period. This body of documents, also acquired by the United States after passing through German hands, is available on microfilm in the National Archives, Washington, D. C. The documents have been analyzed exhaustively by Merle Fainsod in *Smolensk under Soviet Rule* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958), an invaluable work for the study of CPSU history during the twenties and the early and mid-thirties. The present author has utilized a considerable number of the microfilmed documents, cited by document number under the series rubric WKP, T/84, and T/88. While most of the documents directly relate to provincial affairs, they vividly reflect general conditions; in addition, some high-level documents are contained in the collection.

Of entirely different provenance, but similar in that they throw light on the Soviet archives--although to a much lesser extent--are unpublished "candidate" dissertations prepared by Soviet graduate students. On two trips to Moscow, the author examined in the Lenin State Library about seventy of these dissertations relating to various aspects of recent Soviet history. A brief analysis of the value of a group of these dissertations appears in John A. Armstrong, "Clues to the Soviet Political Archives," *The Russian Review*, XVI (1957), 47-52. In *The Politics of Totalitarianism* seventeen dissertations are cited directly,¹ and others were employed as background. The better dissertations are in large part based on Party archival material, and on local publications unavailable outside the USSR. Consequently, many dissertations provide useful details unobtainable

¹See the list at the end of this essay, pp. 39-41.

elsewhere, and as noted in the footnotes of this study, several contain revelations of considerable importance.

Unpublished theses and essays in Western universities contain no comparable revelations, but often present much valuable information on specialized subjects. A number of papers of this type prepared at the Russian Research Center, Harvard University, and the Russian Institute, Columbia University, are very useful. In addition, the very useful doctoral thesis by Thomas H. Rigby, "The Selection of Leading Personnel in the Soviet State and Communist Party" (University of London, 1954), provides important factual data.

Most significant émigré accounts appear to have been published. However, a few valuable papers relating to recent CPSU history are on deposit in the Archive of Russian and East European History and Culture, Columbia University. Several were prepared originally for the Research Program on the USSR, Columbia University; others were prepared especially for the Research Program on the History of the CPSU. Some are wholly or primarily memoirs; others are essentially scholarly studies, enriched by their authors' personal experiences and observations in the USSR. Another group of special émigré accounts is contained in the interview records of the Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System; for a description of this project see Alex Inkeles and Raymond Bauer, The Soviet Citizen: Daily Life in a Totalitarian Society (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959). A large number of these interview records, which are carefully indexed, were examined in the Library of Congress through the courtesy of the Air Research Division. While the records contain relatively little historical data in the narrow sense of the term, the Harvard interview records are very useful for an understanding of the social background of Soviet politics in the thirties.